



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

to be no hunger and thirst, and where the tears are to be wiped from all eyes. Pious *laissez faire* is out of the question.

If active interest is imperative, what is the nature of the activity demanded? To this question religion can give no concrete reply. Its function is to supply the motive force that impels to action; the method of applying this force is to be discovered by effort. The careful study of economic and sociological problems in the light of human knowledge respecting man and his environment may be expected to bring forth effective schemes for social betterment. There should be no balking at the difficulties of the situation, or waiting until one can find the panacea for all the prevalent social ills.

One need not see the end from the beginning. Diligent study of what others have tried to do will enable one to avoid many a mistake, and mistakes made in spite of the best efforts of intelligence will enable one to warn others against wrong methods. Well-exercised brains and hearts turn out products of value whether they are positive or negative. Society will not be revolutionized in a hurry. It will take time for the leaven to spread through the whole lump. There is available now enough knowledge to enable the earnest Christian to make a beginning, but it is not in the gospels. He must turn to men and women who have worked and thought and written for the betterment of men under modern conditions.

CHRISTIANITY AND POLITICS

III

THE SOCIAL IDEALS OF SCHOLASTICISM

THOMAS C. HALL, D.D.

Professor of Christian Ethics in Union Theological Seminary

There were no Dark Ages in the old acceptance of the term. The culture of the few was in the Middle Ages finding acceptance by the many. And from Augustine to Luther the imperial ecclesiastical power was the bearer of that culture to the masses. From the time of Charlemagne onward, the school and university were important centers of growing enlightenment. The authority was so sure of itself and was so linked with the learning of the past that speculation was free and daring to an

extraordinary degree. Nevertheless the basis of life was an external authority. The thought of the period was free only within the bounds of a closed system. Nor was the limitation felt, because the closed system and the external authority were accepted by all, or nearly all, much as obedient children accept the authority of father and mother. Even when the authority of the moment was disputed it was always in the name of the imperial ecclesiastical tradition against which none thought of

rebellng. The Holy Roman Empire was a momentous reality, and even the most outrageous arrogation of unrighteous rule sought shelter under its tradition. The rise of scholasticism was no sudden movement. It had its roots in the culture of North Africa and Spain, and in the schools that sprang up as Paris became the center of a new life, and Cologne and Oxford slowly became the organizing centers of ecclesiastical scholarship.

The Christianizing of the Middle Ages

It may seem strange to some to trace the social ideals of scholasticism to the forged dreamings of Dionysius the Areopagite. Yet to those pages we must go for some of the most insistent conceptions of the scholastic period. The hierarchy with its ordered ranks, its fixed castes, its semi-ecclesiastical, semi-military ideals, its warrior priests, and priestly warriors, its sacramental tinge to all secular life, its glow of oriental color, its static world, and its central authority are reflected not only to the culture and religion but in the social and political ideals of the whole scholastic period.

In a world so full of change and movement it is strange to see how invariably it is treated by the thinkers of the Middle Ages as a fixed and constant quantity. The thought harks back continually to the political and social ideals of a world irrecoverably past and gone. Yet some reflection will explain this phenomenon. The Middle Age was the child of Hellenistic culture, and the teacher was clothed with the infallibility the docile pupil always at first attributes to the teacher. For Dante, Aristotle is as inspired as the

Bible, and Virgil as much a leader and teacher as Augustine or John. The political conditions grew up, and as they grew were identified with, and defended from, the political teachings of the past. Our own republic did the same thing. The pioneers of a new civilization in a tractless wilderness sought help—and found it—from the misunderstood traditions of Greece and Rome. They found, like the leaders of the Middle Ages, much confusion also, but as the Middle Age grew in reflection and maturity the age of adaptation rapidly set in.

In the midst of all social idealism stood the concrete church. Not that the state was not equally divine. The empire was not only to be Roman, but was holy. It was the pope who crowned Charlemagne, and as long as the spiritual supremacy left the temporal ruler to work out his destiny in his own way, there was little reason for quarreling. Brutality, violence, open injustice, impurity, and intemperance the church was set to rebuke in high and low. But it was always assumed that everybody knew what these things really were. War was not brutality, dueling was not violence, serfdom was not open injustice. Royal concubinage was not impurity, and occasional drunkenness could not be too rudely condemned as intemperance. The maintenance of the existent accepted social order or disorder was regarded by all as the duty of both church and state.

The lower classes were politically quite helpless. Their natural leaders were constantly drained off into the service of the ruling class, because all education was in the hands of the hierarchy, and for the poor man the church gave an opening to the highest power. At the same time the hierarchy

was in distinct confederacy with the military ruling class. It had lost all the old revolutionary hope. The power-possessing class was in a hundred ways identified with the ecclesiastical imperialism. The sons of nobles and the daughters of kings were the honored heads of monastic orders. The priesthood was constantly recruited from the younger sons of noble houses. The clever boy of the people was made in the ecclesiastical process even more a maintainer of the possessing classes' interest than the noble's son himself. Not even a man like Luther could conserve the tradition of his class amid his ecclesiastical and academic surroundings. And one like Thomas Aquinas was by both birth and education limited to the outlook of the feudal nobility whose vision he shared.

On the face of Aquinas' political and social teaching feudalism is written in large letters. The phrases are taken from Aristotle, as Aristotle was then understood. But behind the phrase, and in this interpretation, one sees the priest take the place of the philosopher, and Plato's Republic, with modifications from the Areopagite, is made the content of the ideal which is defended by arguments from Aristotle.

The Mission of Scholasticism

Scholasticism is the evidence of approaching intellectual maturity. It was the reflective aspect of the feudal period. The assumption on all fields, including politics and the social order, was that the existent faith and obtaining government were in full accord with reason, and had the highest divine sanction. At the same time there was a growing uneasiness about the actual

relationship of the two swords. In point of fact a quiet struggle for the real supremacy between the state and the hierarchy had gone on steadily with various issues since Nicea. The ecclesiastical bond could not keep the Eastern and Western empires from at last parting. Nor in Europe was it possible for the church to really more than outwardly unify the Teutonic and the Romance drifts. Powerful local leaders made central supremacy increasingly difficult and growingly ineffective. A new class alignment was even as early as the tenth century already on the horizon. The free city rose out of feudalism, and can only be understood in its feudal setting. It was itself a feudal authority, and it depended upon the feudal castle along the trade routes for protection for its traffic. That this protection was often expensive and that soon the protector was to become the antagonist has too often blinded historians in recent days to the great social service rendered even in the wildest days by the "robber barons" of the early Middle Ages.

The Roman military roads had not been built primarily for trade, but they had become trade roads, and with the gradual disappearance of the Roman military oligarchy the roads had become too dangerous for trade. Feudalism built its castles and established its sway along the trade routes and rivers, and at a heavy cost, no doubt, yet with marked efficiency opened again these routes for commerce.

The Rise of Classes

No one, so far as the writer is aware, has traced the connection that suggests

itself as existing between the rise of the free city and the organization of the freedman class, artisan and commercial in its character, and enjoying long before the formal organization of the mediaeval guilds, so well traced by Gross, a gild character. It was in this class, we have seen, that Christianity made such headway, and the political and social ideals of the rising city from the Milan of Ambrose to great Hansa cities of the North Sea are full of the religious spirit in its mediaeval form.

Early in mediaeval history we find clashing ideals. On the one hand there is the agrarian military interest. The possession and the exploitation of the land is the basis of its strength and the reality of its service. On the other there is a rising artisan class, whose interest and strength is the production of things. These craftsmen must live together, and beside them grows up a still further class of adventurous traders, who are neither tillers of the soil nor yet craftsmen. At the same time any sharp class differentiation was not possible. Every castle had to have its craftsman. Every knight had his "smith"; the landed aristocracy bought of the craftsman, and robbed or protected the trades as suited him. And all bowed to the central authority of priest and king. Kropotkin has drawn an admirable picture in his *Mutual Aid* of the interlocking interests, and has abundantly emphasized the narrow and selfish character of the free city in its feudal setting. The separation of society into castes and classes is reflected in Dante and the popular religion of the day. These classes rise out of the economic conditions governing life, and were accepted by church and state as

the permanent will of God and the arrangements inherent in a Christian state. Divine right was not of the king only, but all sorts and conditions of men were in their places by divine disposal. Individuals might rise through extraordinary ability or by special circumstance from one class to another, but the divisions were fixed for all time.

The Struggle between Church and State

In this feudalism the points of strain were many, and unsettled questions of all kinds were constantly arising with their opportunities for conflict. The city clashed with the feudal territorial lord; the claims of church were increasingly heavy, and a strong ruler of the state made the church subordinate to his purpose, while on the other hand a strong pope or archbishop made the state his instrument.

The struggle for supremacy was at times an open one as under Leo I and Gregory the Great; at times it was insidious. Dishonorable means disgraced both contending parties. The forged decretals (ninth century) are only a glaring instance of the evil measures adopted by the hierarchy; and violence, perjury, and ignoble intrigue marked the contending forces on both sides.

At length Marsiglio of Padua challenged the accepted status (1324-26) in his attack upon the usurpation of the Roman Pontiff, and the protest was taken up and voiced with more effective energy by the great Wiclif, one of the really great men of all time. And in this age (Wiclif died 1384) we find at last the question raised of such fundamental political and social import to the world: What is the function of the

church within the political organization? The answer Wiclif gave has never received the attention it deserves, and yet he was modern as few men of any generation can be called modern in the spirit in which he took up the question. The state was, he said, as divine an institution for its purpose as the church was for its end. And temporal possessions were not the end of any ecclesiastical machinery. The church should, as a church, possess nothing. Her dependence should be from day to day on the free-will offerings of the people. Her ministry should live indeed from the congregations they served, but as the primitive apostles lived, without temporal possessions behind them. The governance of all temporalities should be in the hand of the state, but the state should then leave the spiritual church alone, and also defend the local church from the insolent interference of any foreign hierarchy. Thus at last was sounded the demand for a national as over against an imperial church; or rather a spiritual imperialism was substituted as an ideal over against the temporal power of an ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Such an attitude was popular in England, and had Wiclif confined himself to political innovation there is no saying whether he might not have founded an Anglo-Catholic church more really autonomous than the Gallic church ever became, but on similar lines. Wiclif, however, attacked far more than the political church, and he was two hundred years too soon.

Nevertheless the protest was not made in vain. The spasmodic resistance to the intrusions of the hierarchy which

marks not only the history of England from this time on, but also the political world of the continent found in the arguments of Wiclif, and Huss who revoiced them, constant strength. Men were forced to take sides by the growing claims of both parties, and by the evidences of an increasing conflict of interest. The papacy was weakened by the absence of the hereditary principle, which was enthroned in the feudal thought of the day. On the other hand, it offered a chance to ability which the hereditary succession so often must discourage. The Vatican began to become too local in its interests, and to misunderstand the national lives it had done so much to form and educate. It had no place in its social thinking for any measure of political maturity. Its thought and policy were in the last analysis always based upon an external authority. It began to make the serious mistake of confusing the shadow and the substance of authority. It lost its bearings amid the moral and political confusions that now began to be evident as feudalism made way for tyranny on the one hand, or the rule of a rising middle class on the other.

The Decline of the Mediaeval Papacy

The reforming orders failed to reach the seat of the trouble, although they nobly strove in their best estate to continue the work of the church as the moral leader and educator of the people. This failure was, however, inevitable. New social conditions were giving rise to new standards of morality and new ideals of life. The free cities were more especially estranged from the outlook upon life of a church whose

sincerest ministers taught that married life was an evil, property an individual snare, trade and interest but concessions to an evil time. The demand for political freedom could have no warm support from men who considered a vow of abject obedience a passport to heaven. The confusion and anarchy in northern Italy was, in part at least, because the church had no sympathy with any rule but a family feudal form, and the merchant cities were rapidly outgrowing this ideal.

The reflections of scholasticism were intended to show the rational character of the faith, but really only succeeded in revealing the conglomerate character of the system of thought and government which passed for orthodox and established. The underlying divergence of interest between the hierarchy and the national social ideal now well on the horizon of men's imaginations was laid bare in the inevitable discussions to which scholasticism led. The old faith in, and reverence for, the transmitter of Hellenistic culture were often sadly shaken, and such episodes as the exile in Avignon and the rival claims of two popes did not tend to strengthen them. Men began, not in academic circles only, but on the street and in the marketplace to ask questions about the political and social status of the nation, and to form new theories as to the relation of church and state. The old confident acceptance of the theory of two swords, both divine and both supreme in their respective provinces, began to waver. It was seen clearly that readjustment was necessary. One like Dante still supposed that usurpation on one side or the other could be checked and the

old ideal re-established. More worldly minded men like Machiavelli swung to the conception of an autocracy in the interests of the state as over against the internal quarrels and antagonistic ambitions of the feudal nobles.

With Gregory the Great (1076) began the struggle over investiture which lasted on to the Reformation, or indeed in a sense to our own day. Hildebrand was moved by a firm faith in a social and political construction the state was utterly unprepared to accept. On this theory kings and princes were the vassals of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and held their places subject to the papal opinion of their fitness. The crowning of the emperor was not, therefore, according to this view, an act of spiritual sanction of the accomplished fact—the light in which Charlemagne, Otho I, and Henry I undoubtedly saw it—but the witness to the supreme power of the pope as the head of a feudal society, which society was fundamentally spiritual, but whose temporal possessions were intrusted to the keeping of a subject state. The acceptance of such a claim was impossible on the part of the rising nations, whose social ideals must be traced later. Moreover, the claim of Gregory the Great and of contemporary Rome is a real surrender of the old dualism of the two divine swords. For the temporal power of the pope not only subordinates the state to the spiritual sword, but the pope alone as feudal lord with large temporal possessions has no responsibility to any authority besides himself. The balance is destroyed upon which political theory laid such emphasis. The end of the claim was the political bankruptcy of the Papacy.